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## THE BASIS OF AN EFFICIENT EDUCATION—CULTURE OR VOCATION<sup>1</sup>

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I suppose we may take it for granted that the question which we are discussing refers, not to the 2 per cent. of the children who get to college, and not to the 6 or 8 or 10 per cent. throughout the country who get into the high school, but to the 100 per cent. of the children of the new generation. The old philosophy of popular education is embodied perhaps in that legend which appears on the Boston Public Library, and which was rather savagely criticized by John Burns when he was here: "The commonwealth requires the education of the people as the safeguard of order and liberty." We have left that theory pretty well behind nowadays. When we see, as we now see before the legislature, very promising movements in the way of empowering the Boston school board to provide nurses to look out for the health of the children in connection with the work of medical inspection in the schools; when we see another very promising movement before the legislature to place all of the playgrounds in Boston in the hands of the school board, in order that the playgrounds may be made a distinct and effective educational institution, we are beginning to see that education is conceived of in a larger light, and that its value is being measured from the point of view of the positive, constructive welfare of the whole community.

I think it is most important that we should remember that, by the very fact of our being here today, we are not of the 100 per cent., but of the 2 per cent. The point of view of the 2 per cent. has been ingrained into our minds from our earliest years. This question, however, as to the proper relation of culture and

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Harvard Teachers' Association, March 2, 1907.

vocation in our system of universal education is one that, it seems to me, can be solved only from the large outside point of view of the present needs of the people as a whole. From that point of view, we are seeing more and more clearly the necessity of general vocational training. To a very large extent our school curricula presuppose the sort of life which existed at least a generation ago, when the shop, the farm, and the home were all important and effective institutions for vocational training. The educational power of this sort at the source of those institutions has to a very large extent been taken away from them. On the other hand, we have seen during the past generation an enormous multiplication of the resources of culture which are available to everyone. A generation ago the school and the church, reinforced by the home, were almost the only sources of culture. But nowadays the printing-press makes the most varied and vital resources of culture available to everybody. Therefore it seems as if the course of the times, so far as formal education is concerned, was shifting the emphasis much more strongly in a vocational direction, and perhaps taking the emphasis away, somewhat, from the cultural responsibility of our schools.

The old notion we had in this country that every young man of ability would somehow or other make his way into opportunity, we are not quite so sure of as we formerly were. We find that the very confusion and perplexity that is involved in the growth of the country embarrasses a great many boys and girls of real capacity in obtaining the right start in life. The hindrances that come to a very large proportion of boys and girls as they leave the grammar school, on account of economic limitations, or on account of the ignorance of their parents, prevent a very large proportion of those boys and girls from getting the opportunity of vocational training which their talents call for.

Then again another change in our situation—perhaps not so much a change in the situation as a change which is coming in our point of view with regard to the situation—is this: we are entirely too prone to take it for granted that the vast majority of working-people are engaged at tasks for which very little training is required. We are only beginning to realize that in all

forms of factory work there is needed a very considerable proportion of thoroughly skilled men and women. The demand for industrial training is coming from our employers very generally, and the growth of the correspondence schools, which has been referred to, in which there are now perhaps as many as a million young people in this country enrolled, shows that industry is making, not a decreased, but a very largely increased, demand upon the community for vocational training.

Is it not true that in those branches of education where young people are carried right through to a finish in a proper scheme of vocational training, the culture-training is more and more receiving its cue from the specific vocation-training which we see on at the end? And are we not finding that this change in the character of many of the cultural studies is fully as productive of discipline and broad training in the cosmopolitan point of view as was the older type of cultural course in which, sometimes at least, studies were selected distinctly from the point of view of their not being useful? I can remember when it was suggested to me, as a college student, that I ought to take certain studies simply because I was never going to make any use of them and did not like them. If my mind was not fitted to tackle that sort of study, that was a reason I should tackle it. Then again I think we are finding, more and more, that in the vocational studies themselves there is the highest cultural value, because only in the vocational studies does the will get its full outlet. When the full personality comes into that sort of wrestle with a subject which is involved in its being absolutely real to the student, then there are not only moral qualities but mental qualities which come to the surface, and which have often never been seen or known before by the teacher, or even by the pupil himself. It has been well suggested by Mr. Roberts that the full cultural value of a study comes only when that study is conceived and grasped with power on the part of the student. Now, certainly the vocational studies have many points of advantage in the way of accomplishing that final perfect cultural result in the mind and heart of the student.

Is it not true that for the best results in the life of the indi-

vidual it is of the highest importance that the culture studies should be closely articulated with the vocational studies? The humanities, so called, were recovered by the scholars of the Middle Ages, not because they represented that which would isolate them from the community, but because those men were seeking for something that was really vital, something different from the scholasticism of their times; and in their search they came upon the ancient classics as having this vital quality; so that the movement which we often speak of as the "Revival of Learning" is much more accurately connoted in the term the "Renaissance." It was a new beginning of life itself that they were seeking, and it was that sort of result which they got out of the ancient classics. And that fact is proved by the outcome of the Renaissance in the building of the cathedrals, in the development of town life, in the bringing about of the result that every workman in the mediaeval guild was in some sense an artist.

It was through the Renaissance that the guild craftsman got a new notion as to his vocation, and carried this cultural impulse into the practical work of everyday life. Nothing could be more injurious, it seems to me, than to conceive, as we often have conceived, of work as being merely a means. There is too great a tendency in the academic mind, I think, to feel that any person who is not going clear through the academic course with the professional-vocational course at the end, is getting that which, though it is aside from his work, is going to be more important to him than his work. To make culture a sort of bait by which men are tempted to work is demoralizing to the persons involved, and it is belittling both to culture and to industry. What we want out of education is a scheme which will bring to the surface just so far as possible the innate powers and capacities of every individual, and bring those powers to the surface in such a way that they will be seen by him in their setting, so that his powers will have the largest, best, and fullest meaning to him, and so that, as I have already suggested, the most ordinary workman shall have some bit of the conception of the artist with regard to his work.

In these days labor is more and more associative; and that

gives a far greater meaning and interest to work, makes work in itself far more truly cultural, than under the old system. Where the workman is trained vocationally not only to exercise his own individual skill, but trained in the art of associating with other workmen to produce those large accumulated results which come through association, these are peculiar opportunities of personal development in the vocational education. We have to realize more and more that the personality is the individual plus all of the relations and responsibilities that have to do with that individual's life; and only as we develop the life of the individual through these social relations and responsibilities shall we get at that individual and be able to draw out what there is in him and make him realize what he is himself. Only by getting the individual caught in the unexpected contretemps of life and work can we really get the individual's mental powers fully into action. And that peculiar quality of culture which we see in the case of many uneducated workingmen is the result of their having had this vital training through their struggle with nature in their work, and through their association with their fellow-men.

The George Junior Republic has the keynote of its success in the fact that those boys and girls, nearly all of whom have been bred to dishonesty, whose conception of social relations are suggested by that, are put to work, made producers, made earners. They learn the meaning of property and property relations, through the experience of their muscles, and through working and spending together; thus honesty becomes a real thing to them. It is through that sort of experience that we shall get the best and surest educational results.

We need therefore, as I have said, to look at this question from the point of view of the great social need that is suggested by the enormous waste of ability that comes about through the lack of specific vocational training in the rising generation. We need to realize upon the values thus wasted by them for the sake of the individual and for the sake of the community. We need to see that for training in citizenship we are making an enormous mistake in training too much the consumer-citizen and too little the producer-citizen. There is reality in the charge that the

public schools are educating children beyond their station, though that is a very mean way to put it. We must train the children of the rising generation to produce what is really valuable, and balance off the tastes that are being created in them as consumers with capacity, varied and thorough capacity, for producing the sort of values which we teach them to crave. When Charles Pratt founded Pratt Institute, his object was not to train mechanics, but to train citizens; and to him the best way in which to train citizens seemed to be to put a man upon a sound economic footing as a producer. In that way you create a sort of self-help and a sort of individual and social capacity, an equalness to emergencies, which is essential to the citizen in a democracy.

Thus our system of universal education must become a system of universal vocational education. Somehow or other every student who passes through the public-school system must have some measure of such applied exercise of his wits and his skill as will enable him to enter at once into productive industry. The shop does not give that training any more. The home, even in the country, gives it but very little. The school, therefore, must undertake the work. And, as has been suggested by Professor Kennelly, however long or however short the course of education may be, there must be a logical, cumulative articulation of studies that will lead up to and culminate in the vocational training. The school can do this work; that has been demonstrated abroad; it is being demonstrated here. We more and more see that there is a period just after the end of the present grammar-school period—a period of perhaps two years, if not a little more—when the young person is of little or no value to industry. More and more the employer in a skilled industry is refusing to take a boy on until he is sixteen years of age; that boy has not physiologically come into the condition where he is capable of assuming the responsibility of productive work. But those very years are among the best years for educational purposes, and in some respects at least for purposes of vocational education. The time is coming very soon when we are going to see that this practically wasted period has got to be made use of for the purpose of training for livelihood. The risk of making a false choice

has been suggested. Undoubtedly there is such a risk; but that risk, from the point of view of the community, is manifestly a slighter consideration than the present great loss that is coming to the community through the lack of providing vocational opportunities even at this early period of from fourteen to sixteen.

We need, from the point of view of the community as a whole, a democracy of experts. The greatest criticism that is made against democracy is that it does not trust the expert; that the inefficient man, the ill-equipped man, is put into a position of responsibility sooner than the man who has had the training. One great reason for that is because we withhold from the great majority of our citizens the experience of having training, the experience of having their nascent skilled capacity brought to the surface and made available to them and to the community. When we can bring about a universal system of vocational training, then we shall have a democracy that will know how to trust the expert; and we shall then have that best sort of aristocracy—the aristocracy not of the educated, not of those who have chanced on educational opportunity, but an aristocracy of the truly educable. When we can create a sufficiently sensible and complete scheme of education so that the inborn capacity of every child shall be properly elicited and made available, then we shall have a kind of aristocracy that will be final and will represent the complete triumph of democratic education.

And then, in conclusion, if we can, even in a small degree, bring about an educational system of that kind, the social result will be so great, in the way of duplicating and reduplicating intelligence, refinement, and culture, that the demand for culture, and for a supply of all things that go to uplift and refine human life, will be far greater than it is under our present system of education. We have been endeavoring to reach out after the results of culture as a thing in itself. Culture is something that cannot be sought in that way; it is like happiness; it must be come at indirectly. Through a universal system of vocational training we shall attain the highest culture.